

PRINTERS & SCANNERS

FAQ

Q Printer paper costs a lot. Does it make any difference if I use cheap paper?

A Paper quality does matter, but expensive paper isn't necessarily the best. One of the most important factors determining the feel of paper is its weight, measured in grams per square metre (gsm). Paper with a high figure costs more, but it's thicker and doesn't crease or bend as easily.

A good stationery shop should sell paper in different weights, and will have sample sheets available. Whether you have an inkjet or laser printer, there's no point using paper above 100gsm for everyday printing, and 80gsm paper is fine for most uses. If possible, choose a chlorine-free paper from sustainable sources.

If you're printing photos with an inkjet, you'll get the best results only with specially coated photo paper, which costs more than regular paper. In our recent paper and ink Labs test, in *Shopper* August 2006, we got the best results using the printer manufacturers' own paper and ink.

Simon Handby

Printers and audio expert

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HP Photosmart C5180

★★★★

£149 inc VAT

HP's Photosmart C5180 is based on the same inkjet print engine as the Photosmart D7160 printer, which won our Best Buy award in *What's New, Shopper* January 2007. The multifunction C5180 combines this printer with a 2,400 dots per inch (dpi) scanner, and is aimed at creative users and digital photographers.

The C5180's memory card reader is compatible with all the formats commonly used by digital cameras. It has a 6.1cm colour screen and a straightforward menu system. There are some simple photo-editing options available on the printer, including a red-eye fix option that worked on our test image. Direct photo prints are quick at the default setting, with six 6x4in prints from an SD card taking just two minutes and 36 seconds. The C5180 has a regular USB interface and a wired Ethernet port, so you can connect directly, or use a router to share it between users. You can print and scan over the network connection. HP's setup program detected the C5180 over our network and makes the installation easy no matter which interface you choose.

As we'd expect, given its similarity to the D7160, the C5180's printer performed strongly across our print tests. At its highest quality, it produced six 6x4in photos in less than eight minutes. Though this is much slower than its direct prints, it's very fast for an inkjet, and the images were sharper and had less grain. It's also a capable plain-paper printer, delivering draft text and our colour Normal speed document at an impressive rate for an inkjet.

Unfortunately, the C5180's scanner lets it down. It has a high optical resolution, but the images



it captured looked processed and artificial when viewed at 100 per cent zoom, even though we turned off the default sharpening option. HP's clunky TWAIN interface doesn't automatically remember settings or cache preview images between individual captures, and can make scanning frustrating. It's fast, however, with previews taking eight seconds via a USB connection, or 20.5 seconds over the network. High-resolution images that we scanned over a network connection were blocky when compared to those captured over USB. This was because the scanner was producing a lower-resolution scan to keep down network traffic.

Black-only copies made at the default settings took just 34 seconds, but they looked faint and stripy. Best-quality results were a big improvement, though. Default colour copies appeared at the same rate and were more solid, but had a yellowish tint we couldn't fix by changing quality and paper settings.

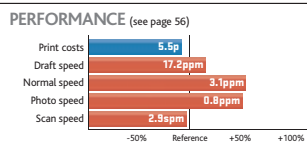
The C5180 is attractive, easy to install and affordable to run. It's a capable printer, but makes disappointing scans and copies. It's good value for a network-capable multifunction peripheral, but it isn't a great choice if you'll be doing lots of high-resolution scanning.

Simon Handby

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast, flexible printer
- ✓ Easy to set up and print
- ✗ Frustrating scanner

INKJET MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL
4,800x1,200dpi print resolution,
2,400x4,800dpi scan resolution, USB
Hi-Speed and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces
PART CODE Q8220B
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk



Also consider...

SAMSUNG ML-2510

★★★★★

£75 inc VAT



This grey laser printer may look a little drab, but it's easy to set up and quick to install. It has a 250-sheet covered input tray and a single-sheet multipurpose feed slot, but it crumples envelopes.

The ML-2510 peaked at 22.7ppm when printing text, which is very impressive for such an affordable printer. It's also inexpensive to run, with a cost per page of around 1.5p, yet produces high-quality text and mono graphics. It's a great compact budget mono laser.



MONO LASER PRINTER 1,200x600dpi resolution, 24ppm maximum speed, parallel and USB Hi-Speed interfaces PART CODE ML-2510
SUPPLIER www.savastore.com DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
✓ Fast; affordable to buy and run; good print quality
FULL REVIEW Oct 2006

DELL Multifunction Laser Printer 1815dn

★★★★★

£335 inc VAT



Dell's Multifunction Laser Printer 1815dn can scan in colour and make black-and-white prints and copies. It has a standard network interface

and can print on both sides of a sheet of paper automatically. It produces sharp scans, high-quality text documents and decent copies, though they can be a little too dark. It's fast, easy to use and cheap to run, so it's ideal for a busy office.



MONO LASER MULTIFUNCTION PERIPHERAL 600x600dpi print resolution, 600x1,200dpi scan resolution, USB and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces SUPPLIER Dell 0879 075818 DETAILS www.dell.co.uk
✓ Fast; cheap to run ✗ Dark PostScript prints FULL REVIEW Nov 2006

KYOCERA MITA FS-C5025N

★★★★

£671 inc VAT

Kyocera Mita's Ecosys laser printers tend to have very low running costs, but they aren't cheap to buy in the first place. Until the launch of the £531 FS-C5015N and the FS-C5025N reviewed here, the company's most affordable colour laser cost over £1,000. At £671 the FS-C5025N doesn't compete with mainstream entry-level models such as the Epson AcuLaser C1100 or HP's Colour LaserJet 1600, but it's well within the price range of a small office. As you might expect for this price, it's a heavy-duty printer, designed for printing an average 10,000 pages a month.

As with Kyocera Mita's other Ecosys products, the printer's toner and developer are guaranteed, in this case to the earliest of 200,000 pages or for three years. During this time, you'll need to replace only the toners, each of which lasts for 8,000 pages. If you print fewer than 200,000 pages, each mono page will cost around 0.8p, and each colour page only 3.6p. Every 200,000 pages you'll need a £529 maintenance pack, but as you can see from the figures in our graph (below), the printer is still cheap to run when you include this cost.

Like some other Kyocera Mita printers we've reviewed, the FS-C5025N isn't particularly easy to set up. Fitting the four, 4,000-page starter toners and a waste toner bottle is straightforward enough, but it made a harsh buzzing

sound while preparing itself for its first print. Fortunately, this didn't happen during any of our print tests. The menu system seems to beep more than strictly necessary, too.

We found the install program comparatively hard to fathom. The FS-C5025N didn't appear in the 'Select your Kyocera model' list. While the FS-C5020N driver installed and worked, we downloaded the correct FS-C5025N driver to perform our tests.

The installer couldn't detect the printer across our network, so we had to manually add and configure a TCP/IP print port. You need to know the correct IP address to do this, but the printer didn't automatically print a configuration sheet during the setup process. We had to use its menu to print a status page, which includes network information.

The FS-C5025N is a single-pass printer, so it can create colour pages more quickly than a typical entry-level colour laser. Even so, it's not particularly fast when printing in colour or black only. Though it managed to print 50 copies of our formal letter at a rate of 19.2 pages per minute (ppm), it paused for calibration for more than 15 seconds during our Draft Speed test, giving a disappointing result. It reached nearly 8ppm on our colour Normal test. Though this is a fair rate, it's some way behind the fastest competitors, such as Dell's Colour Laser Printer 5110cn, reviewed in *What's New*,



Shopper October 2006, which managed an impressive 12.1ppm.

Print quality was fair, with reasonably accurate colours, though we noticed that colour and black elements weren't perfectly aligned on the page. Black text looked fine to the naked eye, but outlines were quite soft when magnified and very small text sizes were messy. This printer has a 500-sheet input cassette and a 100-sheet multipurpose tray. Frustratingly, neither of them is marked with any paper orientation, so it's a challenge to print an envelope or on both sides of each sheet of paper. It can be expanded with a huge range of options that include warranty upgrades, a cabinet, hard disk storage and an envelope feeder. This could help you tailor it to a specific role, or allow the printer to keep pace with changing requirements.

The FS-C5025 has very low running costs, but other similarly priced printers are faster and produce better results. The Colour Laser Printer 5110cn, our current Best Buy, performs better, costs slightly less and is almost as cheap to run.

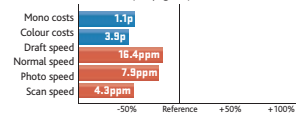
Simon Handby

SUMMARY

- ✓ Cheap to run
- ✓ Scope for upgrades and expansion
- ✗ Average speed and print quality

COLOUR LASER PRINTER 600x600dpi resolution, 20ppm mono/colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed and 10/100 Ethernet interfaces
PART CODE FS-C5025N
SUPPLIER <http://uk.insight.com>
DETAILS www.kyoceramita.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 56)



EPSON AcuLaser C1100

★★★★★

£278 inc VAT

Epson's C1100 is reasonably large for a four-pass colour laser, and it's more tricky than many to set up. In our tests it came commendably close to Epson's claimed speeds, but the most welcome discovery was its superb all-round print quality.

This is an excellent, inexpensive printer with reasonable running costs.



COLOUR LASER PRINTER Colour laser, 600dpi, 25ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE C11C567001 SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.epson.co.uk Excellent print quality
 Fiddly to set up FULL REVIEW Apr 2005

CANON PIXMA iP4300

★★★★★

£55 inc VAT

If you need a budget printer, Canon's PIXMA iP4300 shows that you don't need to compromise on quality. It has two paper trays, and can print on coated CDs or both sides of each sheet of paper. It's fast to produce text, colour graphics and photos. Print quality is high, with no trace of grain, though photos are a little bit oversaturated. Best of all, it has very low running costs.



INKJET PRINTER Five-colour inkjet, 9,600x2,400dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE 1438B008AA SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk Inexpensive; fast; flexible; stylish; high-quality results FULL REVIEW Dec 2006

CANON PIXMA MP160

★★★★★

£40 inc VAT

The PIXMA MP160 costs less than many budget inkjet printers, and it can also make good-quality scans and copies. It's compact and attractive and not too tricky to set up. Unusually for such an affordable printer, it has low running costs if you use Canon's high-capacity ink cartridges. It's great value if you just want a basic multifunction peripheral.



FOUR-COLOUR INKJET MFP 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 600x1,200dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed and PictBridge USB interfaces PART CODE 1447B008AA
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
 Affordable; good results No card reader
FULL REVIEW Jan 2007